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The Bible in the Sunday School.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BIBLE STUDY UNION.

In the *Andover Review* for October, 1890, Rev. Erastus Blakeslee, then a pastor in Spencer, Mass., published an article on Sunday School Bible Study, to which was appended an abstract of a year's lessons on the Life of Christ.

The lessons there quite briefly outlined were subsequently prepared in full by Mr. Blakeslee, and, under the editorship of Professor William R. Harper, their publication was begun by the Student Publishing Company of Hartford, Conn. In July, 1891, Professor Harper's connection with the lessons was discontinued and their publication was transferred to the Bible Study Publishing Company of Boston. Mr. Blakeslee has associated with himself from time to time various specialists in Bible study, and as the result of their joint labors there were issued in 1892 courses on the Apostolic Church, and in 1893 courses on the Gospel History of Jesus Christ, these latter being a revision of the courses on the Life of Christ issued in 1891. For 1894 courses on Old Testament History have been announced, and are in process of publication. In the spring of 1892 a meeting of those interested in the publication of these lessons was held in the city of Boston, and steps taken toward the formation of an advisory Lesson Committee, it being understood that the responsibility for the publication of the lessons and the final decision as to their character must rest upon Mr. Blakeslee. In October, 1893, a meeting of this advisory Lesson Committee was held in the city of New York to consider what steps should be taken to put the whole enterprise on a somewhat broader basis than it had hitherto possessed, and, as a result of this meeting, a call signed by between four and five hundred college and seminary professors, pastors, and Sunday school superintendents and teachers was issued for a meeting to be held in New York City on Thursday, November 23, for the purpose of effecting a permanent organization of the Bible Study Union. At this meeting there were present about two hundred persons. A brief historical statement was made by Mr. Blakeslee, and a provisional constitution, drawn up by those most immediately interested in the enterprise, was presented. This, after modification, was adopted. It provides that all members of the Bible Study Union on record prior to November 1, 1893, the signers of the call for the second New York meeting, and any persons at that meeting who approve its object and basis of organization are original members of the Bible Study Union as newly organized; and that others may become members by signing the constitution. It provides, in addition to the usual officers, president, vice-president, etc., for a lesson committee consisting of two classes of persons. First, sixteen persons divided into classes of four,

each class elected for a period of four years ; second, the members of the editorial board. Members of the editorial board are elected by the lesson committee as at any time constituted, but retain their membership only so long as they continue editorial work in connection with the lessons. It is made the duty of the lesson committee to provide a general plan for the lessons to be issued under the auspices of the Union, to arrange the several courses of study, to determine the order in which they shall be issued, and to make such other arrangements as may be necessary for preparing and publishing the lessons. The Blakeslee graded lessons, to be enlarged and modified as may seem hereafter best, are adopted as the basis of organization, but it is provided that the name of the lessons shall be changed to "The Bible Study Union Lessons," the old name being preserved as a sub-title for a short time to avoid confusion of identity before the public.

The constitution further provides for the publication of denominational editions, and for the representation of the denominations issuing such editions on the Lesson Committee. One such edition of the lessons on the Life of Christ, edited for the Protestant Episcopal Church by Rev. D. H. Greer, D.D., and Rev. Geo. H. McGrew, D.D., has already been issued.

Under the constitution, Rev. David H. Greer, D.D., was elected president, and fifteen persons were elected vice-presidents. The following persons were elected to membership on the Lesson Committee, and were charged with the duty of completing the list : President Wm. J. Tucker, D.D., President C. F. Thwing, D.D., Rev. Edward B. Coe, D.D., Rev. David Gregg, D.D., Rev. J. E. Twitchell, D.D., Professor W. J. Beecher, D.D., Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer, Ph.D., L.H.D., and Rev. W. H. Butrick, as members of the first class ; Rev. Erastus Blakeslee, Rev. Philip A. Nordell, D.D., as office editors ; and Professors Wm. Arnold Stevens, Ernest D. Burton, and Charles Rufus Brown, Rev. D. H. Greer, Rev. Geo. H. McGrew, and Miss Lucy Wheelock as special editors.

In the evening of the same day a public meeting was held in the Collegiate Reformed Church, at which addresses were made by the newly elected President, Dr. Greer, by Rev. A. H. Bradford, D.D., of Montclair, N. J., Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer, and by Professor Sylvester Burnham, D.D., of Colgate University.

It will appear from this historical statement that the enterprise first begun in 1890 passes in large measure from the form of a private undertaking under the control of one man to a public enterprise in which all scholars and Sunday school workers who approve the general principles on which these courses of lessons have been prepared may have a share. That an increasing number of practical Sunday school workers regard this system of lessons with favor is indicated in many ways, and most practically by the remarkable increase in the number of teachers and scholars using the lessons each Sunday, which has arisen from about ten thousand in the first half of 1891 to over one hundred and fifty thousand for the latter half of 1893.